

IN THE CLAIMS:

1-49. (Canceled).

50. (New) A shaft for use with a clamp device, comprising:  
a plurality of alternating first beads and second beads, each of the first and second beads having an outer surface;  
wherein each of the second beads has a larger inner diameter than each of the first beads, each of the second beads is supported on the outer surface of two adjacent first beads, and each of the second beads has a three-dimensional convex torus configuration.

51. (New) The shaft of claim 50, wherein each of the first beads has a three-dimensional convex torus configuration.

52. (New) The shaft of claim 50, wherein each of the second beads has a larger outer diameter than each of the first beads.

53. (New) The shaft of claim 50, wherein each of the second beads has a smaller outer diameter than each of the first beads.

54. (New) The shaft of claim 50, wherein each of the second beads has the same outer diameter as each of the first beads.

55. (New) The shaft of claim 50, wherein each of the second beads contacts the outer surface of two adjacent first beads along a line contact.

iv

56. (New) A shaft for use with a clamp device, comprising:  
a plurality of alternating first beads and second beads, each of the first and second beads having an outer surface;  
wherein each of the second beads has a larger inner diameter than each of the first beads, and each of the first and second beads has a three-dimensional convex torus configuration.

57. (New) The shaft of claim 56, wherein each of the second beads has a larger outer diameter than each of the first beads.

58. (New) The shaft of claim 56, wherein each of the second beads has a smaller outer diameter than each of the first beads.

59. (New) The shaft of claim 56, wherein each of the second beads has the same outer diameter as each of the first beads.

60. (New) The shaft of claim 56, wherein each of the second beads contacts the outer surface of two adjacent first beads along a line contact.

61. (New) A clamp, comprising:  
a handle assembly;  
a gripping assembly having a pair of jaws that can be opened and closed to grip an element; and  
a shaft assembly having:  
a flexible shaft having a proximal end that is coupled to the handle assembly and a distal end that is coupled to the gripping assembly, the flexible shaft defining a bore and comprising a plurality of alternating first beads and second beads, each of the first and second beads having an outer surface;  
wherein each of the second beads has a larger inner diameter than each of the first beads, each of the second beads is supported on the outer surface of two adjacent first beads, and each of the second beads has a three-dimensional convex torus configuration; and  
a cable which extends through the bore of the flexible shaft, the cable having a proximal end that is operatively coupled to the handle assembly and a distal end that is operatively coupled to the gripping assembly.

62. (New) The clamp of claim 61, wherein each of the first beads has a three-dimensional convex torus configuration.

63. (New) The clamp of claim 61, further including a rigid element that can be placed in a first position where the rigid element supports the shaft in a manner where the shaft cannot be bent, and in a second position where the shaft can be bent.

64. (New) The clamp of claim 61, wherein each of the second beads has a larger outer diameter than each of the first beads.

65. (New) The clamp of claim 61, wherein each of the second beads has a smaller outer diameter than each of the first beads.

66. (New) The clamp of claim 61, wherein each of the second beads has the same outer diameter as each of the first beads.

67. (New) The clamp of claim 61, wherein each of the second beads contacts the outer surface of two adjacent first beads along a line contact.